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EDITORIAL NOTES

From various sources the cry resounds that our schools, or our boys—or both—are being “feminized.” When the term is applied to the schools it signifies either that the teachers and pupils are chiefly feminine, or that the studies are feminine in their subject-matter or in the way in which they are taught.

FEMINIZATION

When the term is applied to the schools in either of these senses, it is usually alleged as an explanation for the absence of boys from our high schools, and from the upper grades of the elementary or grammar schools. But in the view of some the evil is more actively pernicious. It not merely infects the institution and thereby keeps the more rugged type of boys away, thus doing them as it were a negative injury; it is held that like the glance of the mother-in-law or the contagion of female wearing apparel in savage life, the predominantly feminine atmosphere of the schools so infects those males who are weak enough to remain voluntarily, or are forced by unwise parents to sojourn in it, that the boys become themselves effeminate and unfit for the serious business of life in a man's world where there are blows to give and take, struggles and contests, with no mercy to the weakling and only contempt for him who asks favors.

President G. S. Hall has laid especial stress upon the matter of discipline. He is reported as referring to the present order as a “saccharine benignity” in contrast with the masculine rule of older days. He advocates corporal punishment as a means of discipline. But it would be unjust to President Hall to make him appear, as the newspaper headlines and even some of his published work would indicate, a believer that the great burning need in education at this time is more flogging. He would probably be far from claiming that the inducement of a liberal use of the rod would at once fill the empty seats on the male side. The domination of the school by the college, the intellectual as versus the manual emphasis, the lack of vocational training, are all a part of his indictment.

The latest recruit to the anti-feminist crusade is Dr. Howard in the *American Magazine*. Not satisfied with demanding the introduction of more men into the teaching body, he would eliminate women entirely. Nor would he stop here. He would eliminate all the men at present employed and replace them with “virile male teachers.” For under present conditions, when the pupils are mainly girls, and the majority of the teachers are women, the lone males who are willing to remain in the high schools are “sissies” or at least “book instructors;” and the books must go too. In their place “must be put forges, carpenters’ benches, draughting

instruments, simple and practical laboratories, and a man's gymnasium and swimming-pool."

These complaints fall under two main heads—the subject matter and the personnel of our schools.

As applied to the subject-matter the term feminization is grotesquely out of place and only tends to obscure the true issue. Just what studies are essentially "feminine"? According to Dr. Howard anything learned from books is liable to this charge. According to others less radical, it is pre-eminently such studies as English or Latin; while natural science or history or mathematics is not. But points of view change here with bewildering rapidity. Only a little while ago, in the schooling of the writer's grandmother, English grammar was unfit for girls—it was exclusively masculine, while but a decade ago the writer was informed by a teacher in a southern city which has never lacked "virility" in its men, that Latin was there regarded as entirely inappropriate for women—it would render them masculine. And who does not recall the cry that went up when women's colleges began their work. Anything but Greek! Greek would surely defeminize woman. The capacity of the classics to unsex both boys and girls is certainly surprising. So far as this particular point is concerned we imagine the effect of actually effeminating boys is like the report of Mark Twain's death—greatly exaggerated. Our doctors and lawyers—at least one of them—if not our teachers, seem to have survived the experience and make on the whole fairly vigorous men.

The real trouble is not that the schools are "feminine" in the subjects taught, nor do we get at the main issue in the matter of personnel when we say that there are not men enough in the schools. As regards subject matter it might be well maintained that it is more remote from an ideal training for the average woman than it is from an ideal training for the average man. And as regards personnel it may be strongly questioned whether the mere exchange of women for men, other conditions remaining the same, would go very far in the way of improvement.

In both cases the root of the trouble is that the community, especially in cities, is thrusting upon the schools a task which was not required of them in the preceding generation and for which they are not equipped either materially, personally, or in respect to the organization of their subject-matter of instruction. When our boys and girls got the bulk of their education at home or in the various occupations which acted as practical training schools, the school supplied what was needed, and for those who were going to college, it gave the needed preparation. When the boys associated with their fathers at home or in the father's trade or business during the most of the time it mattered little whether during the few months of school which the average boy over twelve had, he was taught his grammar and arithmetic by a man or by a woman.

OBSCURING
THE ISSUE

THE REAL
PROBLEM

Now that city homes furnish no opportunity for active work, while the factory and large shop or office offer little work for boys that is educative we have an entirely new problem in subject matter and method. Now that the boys get no companionship from their fathers—and under the existing industrial organization can get none in most cases—the schools must provide the right sort of companionship through its teachers or this will be lacking entirely. Here, then, are two real and fundamental aspects of a problem forced upon the schools by an industrial and social revolution. As scientific educators let us not blur this issue by raising a cry of “feminization,” as though the present lack of adjustment between the schools and social needs were to be charged up to the women teachers.

In asking what reconstruction is necessary we may premise without discussion that it is desirable to have more men in the teaching body. The average boy would naturally feel that he had got into the wrong entrance to a man's work if he found only women on duty as guides. Nor on the other hand is the average unmarried woman likely to sympathize with all the tendencies of rough manhood in the making. She may command the fullest intellectual respect—and, for one, the writer believes that boys should come under the influence of strong women to give him intellectual respect for women—but the game of intellectual acuteness, or refinement of manner, or even of fineness of spirit, is not the only game that the average boy wants to play. He needs the comradeship and strength of the man who is a master in the other games of a man's world of action. And we believe that when the community appreciates the situation and is furnished a clear programme by educators, it will provide the funds necessary to secure good men. At present, we need not point out what is too obvious—the same industrial, economic, and social changes which have imposed the new problems on the schools have raised the standard of living, and offered large inducements in other occupations, thereby making it almost an impossibility to secure the best type of men for any except the more important administrative positions in the teaching body. We wish now rather to emphasize the other side of the matter, namely, that such an increase of men would not in itself meet the situation, nor is it likely to be obtained until it is made clear what the men are wanted to do which cannot be done by women.

First, then, we need to make over our traditional curriculum and methods of teaching with reference to the needs of *all* children under our present conditions. Various experiments have been made in this direction, and we need not recapitulate them here. But no one would claim that we have made more than a beginning. We believe that the states and the nation should undertake much more thorough experimentation to see what can be done in giving a training that shall connect at one end with the boy or girl and at the other with the world of thought and action into

THE TWO LINES OF
RECONSTRUCTION

which the boy and girl enter when the school is left, and shall keep them active and growing all the way.

Secondly, and this we have scarcely touched at all in public schools, we need to build up a corporate life in the school, in addition to the work of the classroom. The intellectual contact of mind with mind is a noble thing at its best, but even so it is not the whole. And for boys from twelve to eighteen it is very far from being the whole. Comradeship in games, in excursions, in clubs of various kinds, gives far better opportunity for effective masculine influence in many ways than does the official and formal meeting of the classroom. The great need of men is not for the sake of flogging the few unruly boys—some of whom need a physician and most of whom probably need a different kind of work to do, that will employ their surplus energies or stimulate their indifference—but for the sake of positive infusion of generous, manly spirit into the activities which every healthy boy needs. Here is where give and take, co-operation and fairness, and the qualities which we recognize as “manly” may be especially fostered. To secure men who will do this work, and command at once the boys’ respect and cordial co-operation, the community may well pay a special price, and the right type of men may well feel that it offers a reward for the finest ambitions.

J. H. T.